

Washington, DC – As Congress prepares to deal with the public health emergency caused by the swine flu virus, the Congressional Global Health Caucus will hold a briefing next week to address the spread of Swine Influenza in the U.S. and abroad. In light of the rapidly changing information about the infection, which has passed the point of containment, and the challenge of keeping Congress informed and prepared to respond, caucus leaders will lead an important information effort to help Members stay up-to-date about the global spread of the disease.

“This swine flu outbreak is a serious global health threat that requires action by governments, medical professionals, and individuals. Our collective ability to deal with this public health emergency depends on us being knowledgeable about flu prevention so we can learn best practices and act. The Global Health Caucus was set up for this very purpose – to fill the information gap and help connect the dots. President Obama is correct in saying that right now the virus is a cause for concern, but not panic. I will continue to work with the administration to make sure we are taking every step necessary to protect the health and safety of the American people and the global community,” **Congresswoman McCollum** said.

“While no cases in the U.S. have yet proved fatal, it is important that we remain prepared and vigilant in our efforts to contain the Swine Flu virus. This must include involvement at all levels of government, including internationally. The U.S. and Mexico need to work together on a coordinated response to prevent this outbreak from becoming a pandemic, and both governments must prepare and communicate to their citizens about ongoing developments. Every individual needs to take precautions to help contain the pandemic, and we must all be cautious about our health and well-being to protect our families and especially our children from contracting this dangerous virus,” **Congressman Reichert** said.

The Department of Health and Human Services declared a public health emergency as a precautionary measure to ensure the U.S. can easily and immediately access vital resources. The caucus will closely monitor the outbreak and its potential to become an epidemic and disseminate timely information to Members and staff by circulating Dear Colleagues communications and convening briefings about the evolving situation.

“The swine flu has emerged as a global health threat, and it deserves our immediate attention. I am grateful to be a part of the Global Health Caucus as we work to educate our fellow members of Congress and the American people about this issue. Having accurate and up-to-date information will help American families be better prepared,” **Congressman Wilson** said.

“In the midst of this new infectious disease outbreak, it can be difficult to stay focused on

long-term goals; but we must. Well-funded medical research, access to primary care for everyone including those in rural and underserved areas, health care reform that ensures all Americans have access to affordable health care, affordable pharmaceuticals, good health education, and well-functioning infectious disease reporting systems are all vital to public health. We must also recognize that these diseases infect the world, and we must continue to be advocates and supporters of underserved world communities; because if we don't, we will all be more vulnerable," **Congressman Snyder** said.

"The swine flu coming as the country and the world is still reeling from the economic turmoil will certainly challenge our public health system, that of countries everywhere and our ability to collaborate as a global community. I am hopeful that the near miss with SARS and our preparation for pandemic avian flu will enable us to address and contain swine flu. My biggest concern is for our more vulnerable populations and I urge CDC and our national leaders to pay special attention to them," **Congresswoman Christensen** said.

The Co-chairs of the bipartisan caucus are U.S. Representatives Betty McCollum, Dave Reichert, Vic Snyder, Donna Christensen, Mike Simpson and Joe Wilson. The Congressional Global Health Caucus provides a forum for Members of Congress, congressional staff and the global health community to share information, dialogue and enhance understanding regarding the existing and emerging global health challenges facing the U.S. and the world.

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